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Viewing cable 08SANSALVADOR1037, FMLN CANDIDATE FUNES ON WIRETAPS, PARTISANSHIP,

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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#08SANSALVADOR1037.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08SANSALVADOR1037	2008-08-29 18:58	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy San Salvador

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.wikileaks.elfaro.net/es/201106/notas/4414/#>

VZCZCXYZ0001
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1037/01 2421858
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 291858Z AUG 08
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0019
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0151
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0345

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 001037

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2018

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SUBJECT: FMLN CANDIDATE FUNES ON WIRETAPS, PARTISANSHIP,
DEBATES, AND MORE

Classified By: The Ambassador, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: FMLN Presidential Candidate Mauricio Funes told us August 26 the FMLN supported in principle legislation to legalize wiretapping for law enforcement, but could not

support the constitutional amendment currently before the Assembly. He had waffled on this in public earlier in the week. FMLN Deputy Hugo Martinez said the FMLN would propose its own amendment that would provide stricter protection of civil liberties. Funes and his wife complained about being harassed by the Ministry of Public Security. Funes charged the GOES was seeking to convince military retirees that the FMLN intended to disband the armed forces, a charge he said was false. He said CAFTA-DR was the law of the land and other trade deals (e.g., with Venezuela) must be compatible with it. Funes said whoever wins the March 2009 election will face a difficult governing situation and he had reached out to ARENA candidate Avila in order to tone down the excessive confrontation of the campaign. Funes said he had agreed to a television debate under the auspices of Salvadoran network TCS and CNN en Espanol; Avila has yet to agree. End Summary.

12. (C) DCM and PolCouns met with (left-wing) FMLN Presidential candidate Mauricio Funes, his wife and Brazilian Embassy Cultural Attache Vanda Pignato, and FMLN Legislative Assembly Deputy Hugo Martinez August 26. Pignato provided this answer to our question about the seeming conflict of interest: "I am a political appointee cultural attache until 5:00 p.m. on work days. Evenings and weekends I can campaign with Mauricio." The Brazilian Ambassador was uncomfortable when he explained this arrangement to Ambassador Glazer earlier the same day.

13. (C) Wiretapping: Funes said he and the FMLN recognized the need for wiretapping as a law enforcement tool, but that they could not support the proposal pending ratification by this assembly because it did not contain sufficient protections against abuse. Martinez said the FMLN bloc was finalizing a draft constitutional amendment to present to the Legislative Assembly within two weeks. (Note: A constitutional amendment is required to enable legal wiretapping requiring a simple majority in one legislature and a two-thirds super majority in the subsequent legislature. End Note.) Martinez reiterated Funes' line that the current proposal does not include sufficient controls to ensure wiretaps are used only for law enforcement purposes. Martinez said the FMLN hoped to reach a consensus with other parties, including (center-right, pro-U.S.) ARENA to pass the proposal by a simple majority in the current Assembly and by a super majority when the new Assembly meets in May 2009.

14. (C) Chavez/ALBA: Funes said he had been asked to react to media reports of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's comments in Honduras on that country's accession to ALBA. Funes said he did not want to be commenting on every statement made by Chavez and told the media to redirect their questions to Caracas. Media quoted CENTAM Parliamentarian Nidia Diaz as saying the FMLN would bring El Salvador into ALBA if they won in 2009. Diaz, an FMLN hardliner, was in Honduras for the ceremony, and was photographed embracing Chavez. Funes commented that El Salvador's existing trade agreements are the law of the land; if Venezuela wanted to make a new deal with El Salvador, it would have to be compatible with CAFTA-DR.

15. (C) Alleged harassment: Funes said he was resigned to the fact that (he believes) his phones are tapped and that his movements are being followed by the GOES. Pignato said she had recently denounced, via the Government of Brazil, that vehicles later traced back to the Ministry of Public Security had followed her in San Salvador, brandishing weapons and photographing her. She said this was part of a campaign to paint her as a potentially dangerous first lady, including rumors that she is a follower of Santeria, is of questionable moral character, etc. She alleged that her application for Salvadoran citizenship is being delayed for political purposes.

16. (C) Cuba: Funes, who has promised to establish relations with Cuba if elected, described his visit to Cuba as a journalist (during the 1998 Papal visit) to interview Fidel Castro. Responding to Funes' rapture over meeting Castro,

DCM noted the totalitarian nature of the Cuban regime, contrasting it with the political freedoms and relative economic prosperity found in El Salvador. Funes and his wife had mentioned that they were animal lovers; DCM described to them how Cuban state security had broken into their house and poisoned their pet while serving at USINT/Havana. DCM also urged Funes to see Cuba through the eyes of Cuba's democratic opposition.

¶7. (C) Military: Funes said the GOES was attempting to convince military retirees that the FMLN's platform plank for "demilitarization" indicated the FMLN intended to eliminate the Salvadoran Armed Forces. Funes said he was on record as opposing excessive "militarism," but that the FMLN would support the constitutional role of the Armed Forces.

¶8. (C) Polarization: Funes said he had reached out to rival candidate Rodrigo Avila with a proposal to tone down the confrontation in the campaign, but has received no response. He said whoever wins will have to govern beginning June 1, and El Salvador will be better served with a less polarized atmosphere. Neither party, he predicted, will win a majority in the Assembly and thus will depend on votes from the opposition. Funes agreed Avila is a decent man; he said he was much more concerned about those behind Avila.

¶9. (C) Debates: Funes said he had accepted an offer from Telecorporacion Salvadorena (TCS, one of El Salvador's main TV networks) to participate in a debate organized by CNN en Espanol. He said he was not concerned about participating in a debate under the auspices of TCS, despite the fact his TV career was spent on a competing network. He said he was unaware of a response from the Avila camp. Funes griped about his ongoing feud with El Salvador daily El Diario de Hoy, repeating standard complaints that the Salvadoran media is heavily controlled by the ruling party.

¶10. (C) Comment: As always, Funes' statements were moderate and tailored for his audience. His views on the polarization of Salvadoran politics and the difficulties facing the next President are on target although we doubt he is concerned about polarization if he loses. The prospects for ARENA and the FMLN toning down the rhetoric of the campaign are slim, because each has a strong incentive to paint their opponent in extreme terms in order to garner the support of undecided voters. On wiretaps, the FMLN only wants them in place after they win in 2009, while the ruling party is hesitant to approve them now because they fear the FMLN might win. Embassy continues to lobby all relevant sectors for passage of a wiretap law, as law enforcement is diminished without one in place.

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